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ARTICLE

Africa Starts at the Pyrenees: Humor, Laughter, and Financial Recession in a Spanish Enclave in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

Located on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco, the Spanish enclave of Ceuta depends almost entirely on subsidies from Madrid. When the newly elected conservative government initiated a rigorous austerity regime in 2011, Ceuta quickly became Spain's "unemployment capital," and my fieldnotes started overflowing with stories of disorientation as personal life-trajectories collapsed and national narratives developed over four decades of modernization and Europeanization became untenable. However, my diaries also contain page upon page of informants telling jokes, sharing caricatures, and watching satirical videos mocking Spain's political classes and, ultimately, themselves. Answering a call by Angelique Haugerud (2013b), this article asks what anthropology can learn from local jokers and tricksters. Following Karin Barber (2005) and Nicolas Argenti (2016), and reading Ceuta's obscene humor as a form of textual practice warranting serious ethnographic investigation, I argue that tricksters, locally appreciated as excellent social analysts, have anticipated anthropological efforts to encourage lay audiences to rethink "the economy," often considered to be an abstract, natural force. Indeed, my informants' humor not only locates the crisis in human relations, but it also describes "neoliberal" discourses as an ideology used by the financial class to claim resources and

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redistribute blame. This article, however, urges caution when dialoguing with tricksters. The burgeoning literature on humor in times of crisis has tended to focus on showing that laughter is not merely a weapon of the weak, but a liberating practice that turns trauma into creativity, maintains solidarity, mobilizes political resistance, and is therefore central to social change. But my Ceutan informants often forget that tricksters are rarely the heroes they think they are. Their lewd jokes create conflict between the enclave's inhabitants, hindering effective political mobilization and reproducing gender, ethnic, and racial stereotypes that raise methodological and ethical problems for anthropology. [Keywords: Europe, financial crisis, Bakhtin, caricature, Spain, Bergson, joking]

Why So Serious?

"Who is the President of Spain?" asked José one cold winter evening during class. His 20 students, shivering at their desks, stared at him blankly. Most of them were *interinos*, junior civil servants temporarily hired by the Spanish state or the local government of Ceuta, a Spanish town on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. Not one of them was learning English in the expectation of having to use it in a real-life situation. In their early 30s, they rather hoped that an English-language certification would improve their dwindling chances of landing a lucrative, permanent position in the Ceutan public sector. They dreamed of leaving behind years of precarious ill-paid work in favor of a stable life in which they could afford a house and raise a family.

Eventually, Maria raised her hand. "The actual President of Spain," she ventured shakily, in heavily-accented English, "is Mariano Rajoy."[1]

"Good!" replied José. "However, you made a small mistake. Anyone?"

Ramón, another interino, stood up, smiling wryly. José's face lit up, urging him on. "Well, the *actual* President of Spain," he paused for effect, "is not Mariano Rajoy but Angela Merkel!"[2]

The laughter that consumed the group lasted many minutes before giving way to more jokes. Smartphones displaying political (and mostly obscene) caricatures made their way across the room. Somebody shouted something about how surprised Merkel would be if she learned that in

this forgotten corner of Spain, the school of languages taught German. "Jorge for Headmaster! '*Deutsche mentalität*' for all!" someone shouted back. The class roared its approval: the obscure German department only had a handful of students and ran at a loss. But one of its teachers, Jorge, had lived in Germany for many years, and missed no opportunity to stress the superiority of the "German mentality" of efficiency, self-sacrifice, and responsibility over the pitiful "Spanish" one of "anything-goes" (*todo vale*).

The "lesson" ended soon after, but the group poured out of the school and into the closest tapas bar, where merry-making could proceed unhindered by schedules and aided by alcohol. On their way, they stumbled into none other than Jorge himself. The poor man was quickly overpowered and dragged to the bar, where he was crowned as the new boss and brought countless liqueur shots as tribute. Some days later over coffee, Jorge admitted he did not enjoy the evening very much; he was unsure whether the students were laughing with or at him. Likewise, Miguel, an unemployed graduate, disapproved of Jorge's rough treatment. "They have time for stupid jokes (*tonterías*) because they're interinos. In exams for permanent recruitment into the public sector (*oposiciones*), they can claim job experience, which is more valuable than language qualifications." Miguel stopped attending classes, feeling he could make better progress on his own.

This was not an isolated event. Throughout 2011 and 2012, I watched the enclave descend into financial recession. My fieldnotes overflow with stories of widespread unemployment as well as disillusionment and disorientation as personal life-trajectories collapsed and national narratives developed over decades of Europeanization became untenable. Yet my diaries also contain page upon page of informants telling jokes, sharing caricatures, and watching satirical videos mocking those they held responsible for Spain's tragic downfall.

This article contributes to the study of how southern European societies are responding to the recession and the ensuing politics of austerity and structural adjustment. Here, anthropology has sought to understand emerging social movements (e.g., Panourgiá 2008, Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011, Narotzky 2011, Gray 2016) and critique their discourse of "indignation" (e.g., Narotzky 2016; Dalakoglou 2012; Theodossopolous 2013, 2014a). Inspired by Scott (1987) and Abu Lughod (1990), scholars have also identified subtler techniques of resistance and coping in times of crisis. The Greeks, for example, deploy the symbolism of "hunger" and

"bread" to link the current recession to past crises, thus fostering the hope that they will thrive and survive just as they had previously (Knight 2012). In the meantime, they experiment with alternative credit or banking systems (Streinzer 2016), and household readjustments (e.g., Vournelis 2013, Knight and Stewart 2016). Citizens, moreover, strategize to satisfy their own need—and capitalize upon others' desire—to maintain consumption-based statuses (Pipyrou 2014, Knight 2015a). This literature has encouraged us to rethink the crisis as a space of opportunity and creativity, where our informants might prosper and where anthropologists can revisit basic ethical and methodological issues (Theodossopolous 2014a).

Recently, anthropology has discovered that humor is central to these techniques of coping and resistance. Jokes, caricatures, and humorous slogans have been identified as methods for expressing public discontent in times of estrangement from the political process (Knight 2015b), as ways of preventing the contradictions of recession (e.g., saving citizens through austerity) from normalizing themselves (Kuipers 2011, Haugerud 2013a), and as techniques offering moral superiority over the politically and economically mighty (Kalantzis 2015). However, ethnographers have been keen to demonstrate that laughter is more than just "a weapon of the weak." Rather, it is crucial to political movements seeking social change. Witty slogans mobilize citizens, shift political debate, and mark political targets (Molé 2013b). The *indignados* of Madrid joke to ease tensions amongst members and make boring administrative chores such as minute-taking tolerable (Fraile 2013). Humor can make or break political careers (Clybor 2013, Molé 2013a, Sheftel 2013), and clown-politicians have destabilized systems dominated by established, though increasingly distant, parties (Boyer 2013a, 2013b).

Nicolas Argenti's recent comparison between Cameroonian mourning rituals and carnival on the Greek island of Chios further develops this relationship between laughter, power, and crisis. Argenti rejects the assumption that against the horrors of trauma and crisis, our informants can only stay silent and wait for "therapeutic intervention by western specialists" (2016:245). Following Bakhtin (1984), he instead shows that societies can appropriate the experiences of trauma and weave them into what Karin Barber (2005:266) would call "texts," or "configurations of signs coherently interpretable by a community of users" that, being detached and abstracted from daily discourse, can be reproduced and diffused. Indeed, in both Cameroon and Greece, the perpetrators (demons, spirits, pirates,

politicians) and memories of trauma (death of a king, pirate raids, recession) become "entextualized" (Barber 2007:22) in masks, caricatures, and carnival floats. In doing so, these terrifying forces are "degraded" into objects of caricature and ridicule that can be (mis)handled and destroyed by the laughter of communities they festively bring together (Argenti 2016). This article tests this model of a liberating, regenerative laughter against the Ceutan case.

Argenti's remark about "Western specialists" encourages us to additionally consider what the analysis of humor implies for anthropologists active in movements protesting austerity and "neoliberal" structural-adjustment programs. Over the past decade, animated debate has raged over the nature of "neoliberalism" and the term's suitability as a category of ethnographic analysis. A number of anthropologists have argued that the concept has become an obstacle to the understanding of contemporary society. Imbued as it is with an uncontrollable baggage of confused meanings,[3] its use raises more questions than it answers (Ganti 2014, d'Albergo 2016). Furthermore, scholars are too readily ascribing to "neoliberalism" phenomena that could be explained differently (e.g., Kipnis 2008, Collier 2012, Eriksen et al. 2015), making "neoliberalism" a hindrance to the full exploration of local categories, and thus fundamentally anti-ethnographic.

This position has been overshadowed by those who, while admitting that definitions do need sharpening, insist upon the existence of sociocultural processes that can be empirically distinguished as "neoliberal" (Ong 2006, Freeman 2007). These processes involve the use of state institutions to create free markets and manage the popular dissent that ensues through punitive technologies and auditing practices. This is legitimized through a discourse of "individual-rationality/responsibility" blaming citizens for crime, unemployment, and failure (Kalb 2012, Wacquant 2012). "Neoliberalism" operates globally, they argue, and not pointing it out, especially when our informants fail to do so, would be anthropologically incorrect and immoral (Eriksen et al. 2015).

For many anthropologists working in southern Europe, the neoliberal cake not only exists, but must be eaten too. Political economy, particularly that inspired by Karl Polanyi (2001), has long sought to expose the historical processes by which the idea of a "market" inhabited by "rational," "maximizing" agents, comes to appear as natural and, therefore, universal (e.g., Buğra and Agartan 2007, Hann and Hart 2009, Graeber 2012, Hart

2012, Jessop 2013). While one need not define the post-2008 era as a "bailout" for anthropology (Schwegler 2009), it is clear that anthropologists, much like Knight's (2015a) Greek informants, have found the crisis to be a fertile place where alternative economic regimes can be imagined (e.g., Graeber 2013, Gudeman 2005, Narotzky and Besnier 2014), forgotten theorists revived (Hart 2010, Latour and Lepinay 2009), and ethnography reconsidered (Herzfeld 2011).

Most importantly, the recession has given economic anthropology the impetus to address new—potentially politically active—audiences seeking explanations for the current economic predicament as well as alternative models for organizing Western economies (Hart and Ortiz 2008, Haugerud 2013b). Thus, Gillian Tett (2012) has argued that the US crisis could have been easily averted if politicians and economists had bothered asking anthropological questions about power and knowledge. Likewise, Gudeman (2016) urges a return to older anthropological models that see society as composed of "economic spheres of exchange," with the household being the most important one. A "peopled economy," he argues, reverses the "neoliberal" tendency for governments to exploit the "household" to prop up the failing, abstract sphere of high-finance. The values of household economies ("sustainability," "thrift," and "careful governance") could also provide guidelines for a fairer financial sphere (Gudeman 2016). Wider in scope is Hart, Cattani, and Laville's *The Human Economy* (2010). The book invites readers to participate in a number of practices—from informal economies, to fair trade, to solidarity networks, to microcredit—that promote an economy that is *human* (i.e., reducible to human action) and *humane* (i.e., the economy ought to serve society not vice-versa). This "human economy" euthanizes the "homo economicus," "that mutilated soul" with "nothing human in his heart" (Latour and Lepinay 2009:25), and resuscitates a complete human agent whose economic behavior is motivated by a dazzling range of personal desires, loyalties, and obligations. Many other authors have called for a similar awakening (e.g., Mirowski 2014; Quiggin 2010; Kiersey 2011; Narotzky 2012, 2013).

Following Barber (2005), and reading Ceutan humor as a form of textual practice that demands full anthropological attention, I suggest that Ceutans might have anticipated this scholarly critique of "neoliberalism." They seem unimpressed by discourses of "maximizing individuals" and "self-regulating markets," which they consider to be excuses that the powerful use to claim public resources and redistribute blame. Haugerud

(2013b) has recently asked economic anthropologists to learn from the tricksters of the societies they study. This article answers her call.

From the Depths of Africa to the Heights of Europe

"Africa starts at the Pyrenees,"[4] lamented Carlos, an elderly post-master, one afternoon. "Youngsters like yourself do not understand what Spain has lost." Repeating arguments that I commonly heard in the field, Carlos said that until the 1980s his country was "sad," "dark," "under developed," and more akin to "beggar Africa" than Europe which received cheap, Spanish labor.

Across the glittering straits of Gibraltar, my informants nonetheless agreed, Ceuta's 80,000 or so Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu inhabitants were doing considerably better. An important military base, Ceuta was also the preferred destination for young men doing their levy-duty (*la mili*). These troops and their families had to be housed, fed, and entertained.[5] They also frequently gave their civilian acquaintances prime-quality army surplus—anything from watches to boots—which sold on the Spanish mainland (*la Peninsula*) for great profits. Ceuta's strategically located Freeport was another source of employment and wealth. Those engaged in trading recall it in nostalgic terms: docks alive day and night, traders haggling over the endless stream of containers, sleep-deprived merchants selling ten containers a day, and funny misadventures with Moroccans, Russians, Chinese, and the strangest traders of them all: the *paraguayos* of the Peninsula.[6] Ceutans uninterested in trading, the military, or the miniscule public sector had to leave. Many went to the mainland to work or study, but some travelled further to northern Europe. "I earned a lot of money," Luis, a former waiter in the UK, once said, "but we were treated like shit. You know *Fawlty Towers*? We were Manuel." The Ceutan believed foreigners saw him as decidedly inferior, barely human, let alone European.

Everything changed, my informants insist, when General Franco died in 1975. Spain became a parliamentary democracy, joined the EU, and opened itself to European capital.[7] In the 1990s, several Land Acts made vast expanses of land available for construction. The ensuing "economy of the brick," with its insatiable need for labor, practically eliminated unemployment and turned Spain into the prime destination for economic migrants (Jimenez Bautista 2012). Moreover, the availability of cheap

credit made home ownership not simply a real possibility, but a symbol of success in post-transition Spain.[8] Economic achievements were followed with civic ones. During the 2000s, Spanish standards of living approached European averages, and in 2005, it became one of the first countries to legalize same-sex marriage in Europe, a moment of special importance to most of my informants. "I was proud to be Spanish," José, from our introductory vignette, claimed, "In 1995, we were Europe's laughing stock. In 2005, we were its leaders!"

During this period, Ceuta's economy also shifted radically, increasingly distancing itself from Morocco in favor of a quasi-complete dependence on Madrid. Compelled by the EU, the enclave fortified its border with Africa. Fierce competition from Morocco and Gibraltar did not help, and by the early 1990s, the golden age of "the bazaar economy" had come to an end. In 1995, however, much to the anger of the irredentist kingdom of Morocco, the enclave was granted the status of "Autonomous City" (*Ciudad Autónoma*). Symbolically, this confirmed Ceuta as an integral part of the nation-state, on par with the mainland. Practically, the enclave gained considerable self-governing powers,[9] although matters central to national security remained in the hands of a governmental delegate appointed directly by Madrid.[10] Ceuta's new self-governing powers required the extension of its civil apparatus. Thanks to funds from Madrid,[11] ministries were created, schools and hospitals multiplied, the police force strengthened, and an ever-increasing part of Ceuta's inhabitants either form part of a wealthy class of professionals working for one of Ceuta's many public institutions, or do their best to beat Moroccan cheap labor and participate in the informal[12] or precariously delicate private[13] industries that support civil servants.

The Spanish public sector is two-tiered. Every year, Spain's regional governments recruit new individuals to either replace redundancies (namely, retired functionaries) or expand the civil service. Candidates for any public position—from teachers, to attorneys, to firemen—have to pass a series of public examinations (*oposiciones*). The competition is often brutal, and the written and oral examination notoriously difficult, randomly testing candidates' knowledge on topics ranging from constitutional law to mathematics. Those who excel, however, can hope to become *funcionarios*: civil servants with unlimited tenure. In Ceuta, funcionarios receive bonuses to their already generous wage and pay little tax.[14] Governmental offices often require additional manpower, but are unwilling or unable to

fund a funcionario position. Special oposiciones are thus held offering 12-month placements (*bolsas de trabajo*). These interinos, as they are known, often greatly outnumber funcionarios, are not paid as well, and are transferred as needed. Moreover, since the renewal of their contract is not guaranteed, they find it impossible to get mortgages and hesitate from engaging in long-term commitments, such as marriage. Nonetheless, they accept these terms as the first step towards a permanent position and the resumption of their lives.

Africa Starts at the Pyrenees, Again

"*Enhorabuena!*" We raised our glasses of beer, slammed them on the table, and downed them. Later, smoking outside, Nuria, an interino accountant, correctly pointed out that I did not seem very enthusiastic about our mutual friend, Pablo, finding a job. Offering a history graduate €1,300 for three months of full-time work in a supermarket did not warrant much celebration in my books, but Nuria simply shrugged. "We do live in a '*puta crisis*' [fucking recession]" she said, matter-of-factly.

The "puta crisis," as my informants regularly called it, started in 2008, when the US housing industry collapsed, taking down with it Spain's banking and commercial sector (Gavilan et al. 2011). Companies operating in Ceuta's diminutive, tenuous private sector slashed wages, sacked employees, or closed down completely. During 2009 and 2010, as unemployment rates kept rising, Ceutans working on the mainland lost their jobs and returned to their parents or close kin.

Things became especially sour in November 2011, when the Christian-Democratic *Partido Popular* (PP) won the national elections. Most of my informants, ardent PP supporters, hoped that the new government would breathe new life into the economy by clearing the webs of patronage and corruption associated with the previous social-democrat (PSOE) rulers. Instead, they watched in horror as, under tremendous pressure from Germany, President Mariano Rajoy initiated a policy of austerity aimed at reducing government expenditure.

Ceuta needed that expenditure. All throughout winter, funcionario interlocutors working in schools, hospitals, or governmental departments reported reductions in their budgets. Scholarships for undergraduate or postgraduate study became unavailable, and by February interinos and hopeful graduates learned that no oposiciones would be held that year.

Soon after, in the summer, funcionarios and interinos had their salaries reduced, their vacations limited, their workloads increased, and the symbolically important "extra wages" removed.[15] By July, interino interlocutors expressed uncertainty as to whether their contracts would be renewed, and indeed, some humanities teachers and junior nurses lost their jobs. Much to my informants' shame, in December 2012, the enclave was declared by *El Pais* Spain's "unemployment capital," with 39 percent of its residents jobless (*El Pais* 2013).

Jobless and disoriented, for the institutions of patronage, hospitality, and humanitarian charity that developed during the 1990s and 2000s to keep Spain and Morocco "two worlds apart," as local politicians regularly say, started crumbling away. Ceutan chests inflate with pride knowing that their government educates and shelters Moroccan children "abandoned" in Spanish territory.[16] But in 2012, a humanitarian commission established that they were being housed in substandard conditions, and ordered the construction of a new expensive shelter the City could not afford. Many of my informants expressed anger at losing control over hospitality, but also expressed discomfort at the inability to pay for something as simple as decent accommodation for children. Similarly, doctors and nurses often reported visits from many Moroccans, and compassionately stated that their respect for human dignity prevents them from turning these souls away. Exhausted after 14-hour shifts, however, they also complained about shortages in resources needed "for Spaniards" while suggesting ways to stop the parasitic "*Moro*"[17] from using or giving birth in Ceutan hospitals. These doctors were typically reprimanded by their colleagues, and, feeling ashamed, often had to withdraw their statements (e.g., *El Mundo* 2012b). Many Ceutan funcionarios likewise found it difficult to maintain their Moroccan maids, an informal relationship infused with the rhetoric of compassion (Campbell 2018). The enclave is furthermore the base for a number of NGOs that regularly send alimentary supplies to the poorest areas of Morocco. But when these same organizations announced that as of 2012 they would be collecting money for Spanish—not "African"—children, Carlos, the elderly functionary, told me that "The NGO never changed its policy." "Well, they used to donate to Africa, now to Europe," I replied, taking the bait. "Ah, but they still do!" he smiled bitterly. "Africa starts in the Pyrenees. Again."

Anti-austerity protest was limited in Ceuta. Public gatherings were regularly called by the localist/socialist party *Caballas*, but they were poorly

attended, and almost exclusively by hard-line Caballas supporters and interinos from the Peninsula. Indeed, Ceuta's bonus-rich civil service is incredibly attractive to mainland Spaniards (*de fuera*),[18] whose plan is often to endure a few years of enclave life and accumulate some money before seeking transfer to the mainland. But the recession made this impossible, and many found themselves stuck in the "Golden Cage" (*jaula dorada*), far from friends, parents, spouses, and children. They also reported depression and loneliness in a small town of "parochial" (*pueblo*) inhabitants who frustratingly refuse to mobilize politically (*pasotismo*). Ceutan informants returned the animosity, questioning the wisdom of publicly protesting against the party on which they depend for their livelihoods. They instead secured their interests by maneuvering in departmental politics. For example, Rocío, an interino teacher, following suggestions from her headmaster (with whom her father had cultivated a close friendship), took up English and started organizing extra-curricular activities for students. Julian, a nurse, mended breaches with his superior by offering to cover his shifts during holidays; while Bea, a drama teacher, decided to get married to hopefully deter the school from axing her.

Unlike Knight's Greek informants, Ceutans seemed unable to turn crisis into opportunity. In informal interviews, they cited a long list of business ideas that failed to take root in the enclave and refused to apply for the "funds for diversification and entrepreneurship" made available by a Ceutan government desperate to control unemployment. Large families subsisted as best as they could from governmental welfare. Like Anis, they made their €300 last by crossing to Morocco to buy cheap bread and vegetables. Like Anuar, they depended on parents, neighbors, and local Islamic NGOs for food and clothes; like Abdessalam, they reminded their children that dinner "was not a Muslim custom"; or like Mohamed, were reluctantly convinced to engage in small cross-border trading, a job traditionally associated with not only Moroccans, but Moroccan women. The wealthier unemployed, bored at home, attended academic courses, probed well-placed friends for job opportunities, and, impeccably dressed, toured the town distributing CVs to whoever would take them. All unemployed residents, above all, hoped their name would come up in the *Plan de Empleo*,[19] and, like Pedro, celebrated when offered temporary, ill-paid contracts with the private sector.

When Ceutans Laughed

Ethnographers have documented how, in an apparently illogical fashion, the recession-struck citizens of southern Europe still spend money on items that maintain their social status and practices they deem important for a good, dignified life. The Greeks still go on their holidays (Knight 2015a), the Italians still keep up their "*bella figura*" (Pipyrou 2014), and the Ceutans insist that life is for "living" (*vivir*) not "surviving" (*sobrevivir*). Bea, Rocío, and other unemployed women still go to their hairdressers, nail salons, and boutiques. Interinos, funcionarios, and most unemployed professionals still go on holiday (sometimes three to four times a year), and send their kids to all sorts of evening classes (like horse-riding). The Moroccan maid is a burden, but still indispensable. Good Internet, smartphones, and gym subscriptions are "expensive, but we got to live. And you meet people who might know of work," as Pablo insists. But most importantly, "vivir" means keeping a public appearance, and this involved joining friends and colleagues for breakfast, lunch, tapas, and drinks in the city's raucous cafés and jam-packed bars. Here, they scoured national, local, and work politics for clues as to what the uncertain future might hold while making fun of those they considered responsible for their predicament.

Much of this joking, initiated by men, involved the sharing—through mobile phones—of comics (*tiras*), gif-images, and satirical videos that often contained sexually charged themes (*guarradas*). Images were additionally shared through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, and, as the introductory vignette implies, sometimes had the power to invade the seriousness of the workplace. The vast majority of this material could be traced back to professional caricaturists or comedians working for the country's top satirical magazines (such as *El Jueves*) or TV programs (such as *El Intermedio*). Sometimes, they were the work of experienced Ceutan or Andalusian carnival performers. My informants appreciated these tricksters (*son buenos*) for their skill at identifying and communicating phenomena that seem paradoxical, illogical, "crazy" (*locuras*) even.

The President's New Clothes

I entered the school's canteen to find the barman and some ten students (mostly interinos) huddled around a funcionario teacher known for his witty double-entendre humor, and laughing at something he was showing them on his expensive smartphone. I elbowed my way into the circle to confront a caricature depicting Angela Merkel, clad in nothing but black high-heeled shoes and ultra-tight latex underpants. Brandishing a red-hot poker (with a Euro at its head) in one hand and a whip in the other, she planted one heeled foot into the small of Rajoy's back, who knelt submissively at her feet, completely naked except for a black collar around his neck. "Brand or whip?" she sternly asked the sweating Rajoy, as the caption screamed, in bold red lettering, "The start of a beautiful friendship!" A marketing undergraduate student butted in with a similar tira: in this one, Merkel did not even bother asking, she had already chosen the whip and was mercilessly thrashing Rajoy's buttocks. "I love punishing Spaniards!" she laughed hysterically. The teacher again, with another tira: Rajoy is in Merkel's office. "I love Germany," he says, innocently. "Good," Merkel replies, "Take a seat!" But there is no chair in sight, and Rajoy can only sit on a German Wold War I helmet, whose steel spike glistens threateningly. "German love," the caption reads, "comes from deep within." Someone was about to present another caricature, but the bell dispersed us guffawing to class.

The recurrent theme in Ceutan humor was the sexualization of the politically unequal relationship between Rajoy and Merkel. Countless tiras depicted Merkel as coldly and sadistically masculine, while the whimpering Rajoy, passively effeminite, became her oddly willing partner. Thus, one morning, a group of interino nurses had a giggle over a tira in which Merkel congratulates Rajoy on his electoral victory and expresses her desire to work with him. Rajoy, sweating uncontrollably, looks at the obscenely large strap-on dildo attached to her ample waist. Another evening, I was having a drink with a group of undergraduate students, whose discussion about the inadequacies of Rajoy's regime gave way to jokes where a young medical student showed a video parody of Psy's 2012 hit "Gangnam Style."[20] Rajoy shows up as an arrogant bully, but turns submissive when he runs into Merkel, for whom he pulls his pants down to reveal his gold-and-red underwear. Some comics sexualized and infantilized Rajoy. Pictures that photo-manipulate Rajoy into a pouting baby lying in Merkel's arms and staring longingly at her breasts were easy to come across. "If you don't

do as you're told, you won't get any treats," she admonished gently in one tira. Another caricature draws Rajoy as a carpet, screaming in pain as Merkel wipes her shoes on him. "Welcome home!" the caption reads. A common trope was to portray Rajoy as a puppet, lying lifelessly in Merkel's lap, worn in her hand, or dancing as she operates the strings. An impressive photo-manipulation shared by a satirical Facebook page parodies blockbuster movie posters. Rajoy, dressed as a 1950s mafia boss, walks towards the reader looking hilariously determined. In the background, the Moncloa flies a red flag charged with a white circle charged with a black Euro sign. "Public Enemy" screams the title, "A movie by Angela Merkel."

While most tiras, as the above examples indicate, depicted Rajoy as an unequivocal loon, comic strips dealing with his management of the austerity regime represented him as a cunning sadist, who enjoys inflicting pain and tricking Spaniards into voting for him. In one tira, sent by some funcionarios trying to explain the recession to me, Rajoy repeats a quote from a press-conference: "The age of petty cuts is now over," he says as he drops a small pair of scissors and brandishes an enormous chainsaw. Indeed, caricatures depicting Rajoy as Edward Scissorhands are common. "We're done with austerity," Rajoy claims in another comic. However, the President is clearly lying, for his nose, like Pinocchio's, is expanding rapidly, and pierces right through the heart of a worker standing by. A tira a university teacher shared with his colleagues as they discussed the recession shows Rajoy holding a bloody dagger. In front of him, a man and a woman are tied down to a red altar decorated with skulls and Euro-symbols. They seem petrified. "Don't look at me that way," Rajoy mutters, his face expressionless, "I told you some sacrifices had to be made!" Overlooking the grim scene is a golden statue of a fat, six-armed man, posing in the style of Shiva, the Lord of Dance. He is dressed in a suit and a top-hat, has a cigar in his evil smile, and a money bag in each hand, and engraved on his wide torso is the word Bankia.[21]

"Not Enough Bread for all this Chorizo"

I introduced Laura to a group of acquaintances having breakfast in a cafe one February morning. Sitting down in chairs made available to us, we tried to tune into the existing conversation. Jesus, an unemployed history teacher, was dramatically describing how his sister had applied for a legal consultancy position in a Catalonian town. She was shortlisted for an

interview, but failed to get the job because the director preferred another candidate who could speak Catalan. Jesus's audience was outraged by the Catalan director's behavior, and soon started making fun of Catalans and their secessionist efforts. One started parodying their language, speaking some Italian-sounding gibberish, while another implied their unimaginative nation-building ripped off Cuba's revolutionary discourse and flag. Someone brandished a tira depicting Arturo Mas[22] as a bearded Moses who got lost leading his people to their promised land. Jesus replied with a YouTube clip where Mas, dressed as *Braveheart*'s William Wallace, rides up to an army of Catalonians armed with spears.[23] The Catalan soldiers in the clip shout that it is high-time Catalonia became its own nation-state, free from the EU, and sporting its own football league. Mas tries to explain that independence might look somewhat different, and the confused troops drop their weapons and go home. Everyone laughed as to how stupid and misguided Catalonians are. Eventually, Africa, an IT technician, took interest in my friend Laura:

"New to Ceuta?" Africa asked.

"Yes, I work at the port," Laura replied.

"And where are you from?"

"Barcelona."

There was a moment of awkward silence, until Jesus decided that since the damage had already been done, there was no point holding back. It is "unfair" that Catalonia uses its bilingualism to exclude Castilians while they are free to work wherever they want, he argued. Others testified to Catalan snobbery, and one embarked on an epic tale of how Catalans refused to help him while on holiday because they claimed they didn't speak *castellano*. Laura said nothing, but afterwards warned me never to introduce her to "people of the *presidio*"[24] again. Her fatal first encounter with Ceutans, an episode she never restrained from retelling, reinforced her already low opinions of the enclave's inhabitants.

Humor could, therefore, have an unexpectedly divisive effect. Occasionally, it was explicitly used to wound. A Valencian physics teacher often teased one of her funcionario friends by sending her tiras mocking Rajoy's attempts at keeping the country together. In one such comic, Rajoy poses in Catalan costume. "I'll become pro-independence," he claims, smugly, "I'm so incompetent that if I join, the movement will surely fail." When Mas's movement floundered in late 2012, the Ceutan bought a copy of *El Jueves* and thrust it—in public—into her friend's face. The magazine's

front cover depicted Rajoy jubilantly reproducing the Catalonian independence flag, *La Estelada*, by bending over and exposing his anus while holding the traditional striped flag of Catalonia below his buttocks. "Here's your starry banner!" he shouts triumphantly at the vanquished Mas. The Valencian took it very badly. The two spent several months avoiding each other, and when I was sent to mend the breach, the Valencian said she had had enough of "these villagers. They can't take a joke! She embarrassed me in front of my students! It was the last straw!"

Privately interviewed, almost everyone complained about how not only Rajoy but the entirety of the Spanish political class, including the monarchy and the banks, were solely interested in preserving the status quo and their access to Spanish wealth. The PSOE[25] and PP might present themselves as mortal opponents, I was often told, but that's just a "set up" (*montaje*). Ultimately, they are "all friends," "a sect," "a free-masonry," or, most commonly, "*chorizos*," Spanish slang for "thieves." Many repeated the pun sloganized by Madrid's indignados: "We don't have enough bread for all this chorizo." There were too many thieves, and too little left to steal.

These fury-evoking (*indignantes*) spectacles, as Jesus pointed out, "are so incredible, you can barely tell fact from fiction, joke from reality." He recalled one case where the PP politician Andrea Fabra was filmed shouting "Fuck them!" as new austerity measures were announced. "You'd almost think she's just revealing party policy," Jesus joked. Other cited episodes included the use of public funds to hire clowns for a birthday party, the Majorcan Tourism Minister posing with a pair of bleeding deer testicles on his head, and the monarchy's involvement in a money laundering case that forced the King to persuade the court to release Princess Cristina, wife of the scandal's perpetrator (*El Mundo* 2012a). A tira shared by a number of my informants thus depicted the King, naked, sitting in a gold-gilded bed. His left arm is wrapped around a blindfolded woman lying by his side. Evidently dazed, she is unable to hold onto her sword and scales. "Corinna[26] is now a thing of the past," the caption reads "The King now screws Justice."

In public, joking becomes politically consequential. In one instance, one newspaper editor sought a "cheeky" journalist willing to openly ridicule the PP. "The government only funds you if you're dangerous," he commented solemnly. But that was an exceptional case: generally speaking, people watch their tongue around high-level funcionarios known to be PP supporters (thought capable of influencing oposiciones, promotions,

or welfare distribution). Thus, one afternoon over coffee, I was discussing with Marco, a clerk, the King's infamous 2010 Botswana hunting accident, when the royal jeep was ambushed by an elephant that broke the King's hip, costing Spaniards tens of thousands of Euros. This commentary was tailed by sharing a number of tiras involving the king's relationships with elephants, but climaxed with a famous *El Jueves* tira—originally banned—whose caption read: "Elections are coming: 2,500 euro for every kid!" The then still Prince of Spain, Felipe was drawn naked, having sex with his wife Letizia. "Getting you pregnant," he exclaims, "would be the closest to real work I've done my entire life!" Carlos, however, told me to shut up as a mutual friend of ours, a high-ranking civil servant and the son of an army lieutenant, approached to greet us. "Monarchist," Carlos explained later, "they've no humor and good connections, I hear he personally drove some people into retirement. Not sure I want to test that theory."

Similarly, one afternoon over lunch, some interino teachers were watching a clip of a Cadiz carnival performance mocking Bibiana Aido, the under-achieving daughter of a high-ranking PSOE politician who, in 2008, had been given the reins of the brand new Ministry of Equality. The irony was not lost on most of the group, but two female interinos, self-declared socialists, did not find it funny. Unlike the "PP's church-loving fascists [*fachas*]," Aido's ministry had done much for minority rights in Spain, they protested. In any case she was no worse than Fátima Báñez, PP's Minister of Employment. "If she managed to land a job," one laughed nervously, "then we must be really coming out of the crisis.'"

The Mirror

Luis laughed out loud as he finished reading an article about Juan Vivas's[27] declaration of support, in these hard times, for an undivided Spain led by the monarchy. "In the Peninsula," he told his colleagues, "you have Catalans and Basques saying 'No! We're not Spanish!' and Madrid tells them, 'Yes, you are! You can't leave!' Ceutans are the only ones who want to be Spanish. 'Look! We're good Spaniards!', we say. But Madrid replies, 'No, you're Moros.'"

Indeed, my informants had a taste for gallows humor in which they were the butt of their own jokes. For example, one caricature depicts a desperate woman standing on her balcony. A ghostly hand—the words Bank, Government on its wrist—is about to nudge her off the edge. A local

comic shows some Guardia Civil guarding the border with Morocco. "You sure you want this?" they ask the Sub-Saharans climbing over the wall into Spain. Another tira features a group of hopeful men approach a prostitute. "No, I don't do group discounts," she tells the disappointed group. Similarly, in a professional caricature, Jesus has been nailed to a cross, but only by his feet, so he has fallen forward, face-planting into the stony ground. "Sorry, we're out of nails," a Roman soldier apologizes. "Puta crisis," a frustrated Christ replies. And finally, when one evening some university students were discussing the mounting rate of suicides, a nursing student reiterated an *El Jueves* joke: "Come on," he said, "It's not like Rajoy can change the law of gravity. Besides, suicides are the only thing keeping unemployment in check at the moment." Most laughed nervously, but some found it offensive, I later learned.

Some material ridiculed Spaniards for failing to see the crash coming. A famous animation by Aleix Saló[28] describes Spain as a country that has just woken up with a massive hang-over and must be reminded what happened during the drunken 1990s and 2000s. It all started, Saló claims, when "the God of Neo-Liberalism" (*el dios Yuppie*), represented as a cool-looking bearded man with sunglasses and a Euro-halo, appeared to President Aznar in 1998 and gave him two stone slabs bearing the new "Land and Labor Laws." Over the ensuing prosperous decade under Aznar's leadership (he now wears ragged robes and wields, like Moses, a staff in one hand and the stone slabs in the other), Spain spent so much cheap credit it really thought it was rich. But the "Spanish Dream," Saló says, was an illusion conjured by financial speculation: modern "*España*" (symbolized by the Osborne Bull) was, all along, the third-world "*Españistan*" (drawn as a skinny, dying cow).

Grotesquely Mechanical Texts

A systematic analysis of Ceuta's humor allows us to sharpen anthropological understandings of laughter's relation to crisis, while addressing the role academics can/should play in European protest movements. If we accept Ceuta's caricatures and jokes to be a type of "text" as defined by Barber—abstractions from the flows of daily discourse that can be reproduced and diffused (2005)—then analysis can proceed along the guidelines she recommends anthropologists follow when studying these cultural products. Texts, Barber argues, seem to invite close scrutiny and

dialogue. We should surrender to this allure, bringing our interpretative apparatus to bear on a key way societies think about and represent themselves (Barber 2007:1–14). Secondly, anthropologists must pay attention to "entextualization" (2007:22), the process of creating text out of daily discourses. Who, then, makes texts, and why? Which genres[29] do they belong to? Is "humor" a genre? Are there local traditions of "humor"? How do texts lose and adopt meaning as they enter new sociocultural contexts?

Anthropology has generally approached humorous texts from a teleological perspective that goes back to Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud. Their "Relief Theory" viewed laughter (and joking) as the safe release of pent-up physiological or psychological stress (Morreal 1987, Freud 1976).[30] Classical social anthropology transplanted this idea of stress relief to the *social* body. Political hierarchies, exploitative relationships and obligations, household feuding, inter-factional struggle, exclusive kinship roles: all generate tensions that threaten the reproduction of society's structure. Hence the need for special institutions that mock and invert these stress-generating relationships and act as "taps" for the release of social pressure (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, Honigmann 1942, Charles 1945). It is clear, however, that the hands of the established order are never far from the valves controlling this pressure (Welsford 1968, Sales 1983). DaMatta and Green (1983) therefore accuse humor of being "Janus-faced" because it ultimately reproduces the social-structure it contests. Eagleton (1981:148) similarly laments that "there is no slander in an allowed fool," while Balandier (1970:40) concludes that humor is "power's supreme ruse: to allow itself to be contested ritually in order to consolidate itself more effectively."

Preoccupation with the function of humor is still central to studies of satire in crisis-torn Europe, although, as we have observed, effort has been dedicated to show that humor can mobilize overt political action aiming to *transform* social-structure. Ceutas's distinctive taste for obscene jocularity, however, urges us to reflect on the *form* of humor (particularly its articulation around specific tropes) as well as its *function*. "Relief theory" is not very helpful here, so we turn instead to Henri Bergson and Mikhail Bakhtin, who insist that the analysis of what humor does must be suspended until we consider what humor is.

We laugh, Bergson (2005) argues, when the situations we find ourselves in, the characters we meet, the way they behave, appear "mechanical," that is, driven by some internal, incontrollable, automatic momentum. The

humorous object is, therefore, unable to react to its social environment, which is always changing. This is the central kernel of genres such as satire, parody, or irony collectively identified as "funny." Mismatches between "society" and the "mechanical object" can proceed from physical defects (misshapen limbs, stutters, uncontrollable bowels) or from flaws of character (absent-mindedness, vices, virtues, bad habits) that make individuals misjudge the world around them and oblige them to act in contextually inappropriate ways. Bergson (2005) concludes that laughter is indeed coercive, but the object of mockery must be first identified (or produced) as too slow, too detached, too stupid, and/or too different to respond to the ever-changing needs of "society."[31]

Ceutan laughter is provoked by mechanical responses to the "puta crisis," a social environment characterized by radical change and uncertainty. The main contradiction, as noted, involved a political class of noblemen, cultists, gangsters, and chorizos oblivious to the grim realities lived by those who had entrusted them with saving the country. Tiras thus depict them as fools unable to govern their bodies or desires (let alone a country); or, alternatively, as cunning individuals selfishly using their administrative acumen. Equally ironic to my informants, are policies designed to protect a nation by redirecting resources to the financial class (held responsible for the recession) at the request of Germany (assumed not to have Spanish interests at heart). Many were the mechanical flaws offered by the tiras to explain this contradiction: politicians were regularly imagined as cowards, prostitutes, sexual slaves, carpets, babies, and puppets, morally weak characters whose very nature is to bend, perhaps even voluntarily, to higher agencies. By extension, many tiras saw Spanish politicians as mystified by demands by the financial sector for more public money and the use of legal mechanisms to draw more and more national institutions (e.g., public land, labor, housing, health) into a free market dominated by the banks. This rhetoric, in fact, was often depicted as a false religion (e.g., Saló's Yuppie God, *El Jueves*'s cultic Bankia) which—being false—proceeds from human interests and turns the intellectually-challenged into misguided prophets. Some tiras, furthermore, located the crisis in Spanish national character: Spaniards *thought* they were European, but they lacked the moral fiber, the intellectual foresight, and the civic maturity to use the gains of the 1990s to prepare for darker times ahead. In short, the crisis struck Spain because it is Spain: a perfect mechanical trope.

While Bergson urges us to dwell on how humor and indignation are but different sides of the same coin that is social contradiction, Bakhtin offers insights into a similar relationship between laughter and horror. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin traces laughter's history back to the middle and classical ages, where Europeans "lived in two worlds" (1984:7). On the one hand, is the "official world" of the established political order, along with the rituals and myths that performatively institutionalize this order as divinely ordained or, alternatively, natural and ahistorical. Mirroring this is "a second world outside officialdom in which all people participated" which offered a "completely different, non-official" explanation "of man and of human relations" (1984:7). This was achieved, Bakhtin argues, by taking all that projects itself as "high, spiritual, ideal, abstract, distant" and "degrading" it to the "material level, to the sphere of the earth and the body (1984:19–20)." And what a body! Power is confined in "grotesque," out-of-shape vessels disgustingly unable to control their insatiable primary needs (i.e., to feed, to defecate, to procreate). Thus "mechanized," to echo Bergson, the agents, symbols, and practices of power—no matter how abstract and terrifying—become objects of ridicule to be destroyed by ritual laughter. "No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded seriousness, no pomposity, no ready-made solution" was safe "degradation" (Bakhtin 1984:3). Actually, the harder something tried to escape "the folk"—through censorship, perhaps, or with threat of hellfire—the sweeter its violation becomes.

Bakhtin laments that modernity brought with it the triumph of "the official world," and the confinement of degrading laughter to set times and spaces (such as carnival or textual genres like satire) (1984:59–144). Nonetheless, it is impossible not to recognize degradation at work in Ceutan humor. Public figures and abstract organizations (politicians, royalty, banks, nations, governments) are given repulsive and ridiculous bodies. Complex relations between these figures and organizations, are likewise reduced to terrifying, yet hilarious bodily interactions: politicians are locked in orgies (peer-like, though exclusive encounters) with banks; arcanely complex financial maneuvers become violent sexual encounters (where, clearly, someone is screwing someone else). Likewise, in the upside down world of recession where "aid" translates to painful austerity, the intimacy of sex becomes violent abuse. The list goes on—austerity is a weapon that kills; the limitations imposed by recession are explained in frustrated bodily functions (e.g., failed sexual encounters); Spain's

embodiment as the proud Malboro Bull is discarded for a dying third-world cow—although an interesting problem arises when grounding the unequal relationship between Germany and Spain. Evidently, satirists find this conflicts with Rajoy's and Merkel's actual genders. Their masculinity and femininity therefore become weirdly inverted and confused.

Where does this leave us in relation to anthropological attempts to guide and inform protest movements? As Argenti (2016) has observed occurring on the island of Chios and in the kingdom of Oku, when faced with a storm that has collapsed life-trajectories and national narratives, stranded them in the enclave, or scattered them across Spanish territory, the inhabitants of Ceuta have explored responses other than just keeping calm and holding on for dear life. They weaved the experiences of trauma into creative texts that provide hilarious explanations to infuriating contradictions and turn the horrifying agents of power into ridiculous objects that can be overcome by laughter.

Moreover, scholars have noted that if specialists of comic "entextualization" want their work to resonate, they must be, first of all, excellent social observers and critics (e.g., Douglas 1975, Billig 2005, Sciama 2016). And, on this level, their observations seem similar to those of anthropology. Satire exposes the "economy" as a "human" and "peopled" one, reducible to political interactions between identifiable human agents, the more powerful of which are branded responsible for the crash. The tiras described in this article have no problem parodying the discourses of "neoliberalism" (free markets, structural adjustments, individual rationality-responsibility-discipline) as an ideology that claims to be at once arcane and natural, but is in fact used by a small group attempting to suck Spanish resources. Spanish satire suggests that those who follow these principles become pitifully grotesque caricatures not too dissimilar to Tarde's *homo economicus*. Hopelessly out of tune with the world, they are dangerous not only because they mechanically hack limbs and push Spaniards off (literal and metaphorical) balconies, but because they seem unable to stop from insisting that the fault for the recession lies squarely with the average, financially incompetent Spaniard (e.g., *El Pais* 2009, *Libertad Digital* 2009). Furthermore, although the majority of the satire cited ridicules "neoliberalism," it does not consider it as the major bogey. In a nod to Polanyi (2001), they instead reflect on the role that the Spanish political class—the nation's elected champions—ought to play in *governing*, not exorcizing, demands from the EU or the banking sector. The overarching concern is

that the government either offers only pathetic resistance to capital, or has altogether discarded its role as the manager of the "double movement," throwing its lot behind these hostile interests.

At this point, to follow Barber—and therefore shift our attention to 1) the specialists of entextualization themselves (often invisible or silent in ethnographic texts) (2007:103–136), and 2) the traditions and tropes of satire as a local genre (2007:32–66)—is to part ways with Argenti and other scholars of humor. In effect, three issues arise that advise caution when dealing with tricksters.

First, the texts that my informants seemed so fond of exhibited many characteristics typical of a long and venerable tradition of satirical production in Spain, a tradition which, my informants agreed, finds its undisputed apex in the Andalusian carnival (Gilmore 1998, Gilmore and Gilmore 1979, Mitz 1997). Amongst the main traits of this tradition—its dominance by men, its wit and lyrical genius, its propensity for disaster (which we will shortly revisit)—is, of course, its reliance on obscenity as well as crude tropes of gender, class, ethnicity, and race. Indeed, while my informants' joking demolished the symbolic order, it could not destroy all of it, and this is key. Actually, not only were many (hierarchical and coercive) dichotomies and stereotypes left untouched, they actually had to be reproduced for humor to mount its assault on power. For example, Spanish elites were blamed for the country's collapse, but in order to quantify the gravity of the situation, several tiras had to compare Spain with Africa, where Africa denoted an undesirable, uncivilized, backwards state of being. Similarly, the "degradation" of Rajoy's governance of the banking sector rests on the assumption that prostitutes are "low" beings who sell their dignity and integrity. Tiras about Spanish–German relationships reproduce gender stereotypes (where passive = female). Cultural essentializations of all types were the blocks on which most degradation was built. Bergson's "mechanical objects" are just as questionable, for in order to establish, emphasize, and overcome the contradictions required for humor, artists had to sometimes translate political ineptness into physical and mental disability, or further solidify questionable national stereotypes. As Theodossopolous (2014a) outlines in regards to the discourses of the "infuriated," humor can exhibit deconstructive abilities that need to be taken seriously. However, it can (and sometimes must) be simultaneously simplistic and essentialist, reproducing racist, xenophobic, masochistic ideas that present writing challenges for the ethnographer and make anthropologists think twice before

rallying behind (or leading, even) these movements (Theodossopolous 2014b).

Further analysis of the Ceutan case leads us to question the integrative, liberating power of humor. Certainly in Ceuta, while humor ridiculed elites and their ideologies, it was also effective at sparking conflict amongst "the people." Jokes confirmed, reproduced, and amplified animosities between Ceutans and "de fuera," Castilians and Catalans, "funcionarios" and "interinos," public servants and private employees, PP supporters and PSOE activists, monarchists and republicans, employed and unemployed, etc. These collective identities, along with discourses seeking to (de)legitimize a groups' claim to local resources, though pronounced in times of recession, have been present in Ceutan society since the shifts that made it almost totally dependent on public expenditure. These antagonisms, at once born of Ceuta's singular economy, have done nothing to facilitate effective political mobilization to resist austerity and/or change the enclave's economic model.

Of course, if Ceuta's existing social tension is the powder keg, the provocative nature of Spanish traditions of humor supplies a most ardent flame. Scholars have repeatedly noted how Spanish satirists, heavily censored and suppressed during long decades of dictatorship, have learned to skillfully use their lyrical and artistic genius to metaphorically encrypt their assaults on politicians or peers (Schrauf 1998, Gonzalez Troyano et. al. 1983). These cryptic messages leave targets with two equally unappealing options. One can keep calm, carry on, and hope that either no one gets the reference or that the joker meant no lasting harm. But this might be interpreted as cowardice in a small town such as Ceuta, where reputation is so important, yet so easily ruined. So, it seems safer to take exception to ridicule. The ensuing rift can spiral out of control. Just to give one dramatic example, in 2006, one Muslim politician sued some carnival performers for lyrics he found to be racist and xenophobic. The six-year feud that followed undermined the authority of the law-courts and Ceuta's conflict-resolution abilities, and climaxed in a large protest by the enclave's Muslim population that saw shops vandalized and two elderly Christians hospitalized (Campbell 2014). The same uncomfortable ambiguity of humor, however, is something we have seen operating on a smaller, more personal level in the vignettes discussed in this article.

Thirdly, while the recession does inspire satirists, we can hardly claim that the caricaturists of *El Jueves*, or the semi-professional performers

of the carnival, or the satirical presenters of *El Hormiguero*, are *reducible* to the crisis. It is easy to forget that tricksters, much like the genres they belong to, have predated and will likely outlive the recession. They have careers, and mock for a living. Of course they use their genius to swipe at banks and politicians! How could one overlook such easy targets? But ultimately they make fun of everyone: royals, politicians, bankers, the left, the right, clergymen, atheists, and even their own audiences. Additionally, their major breakthroughs take place when the ambiguity of their art creates drama. *El Jueves*'s most famous caricature remains the one that got banned, the *carnivalistas*' feud saw them comfortably winning three consecutive competitions, and I could not but suspect that when my (less skilled) interlocutors reproduced jokes that got them in trouble, the real winner was neither the interino nor the politician, but the trickster many miles away whose critique could shape-shift in unpredictable ways to yield unexpected effects. One can never be sure if the joke was on the joker.

So what can we learn from tricksters (Haugerud 2013b)? Clearly, jokes—especially those written and told by professional comedians—might have agendas that challenge anthropological sensibilities. Nevertheless, their acute command of social, political, and cultural processes cannot be ignored. In effect, as Fernandez and Taylor point out (2001), tricksters and anthropologists share a passion for irony, as well as phenoma that challenge our logic and understanding of the human condition. This, I find, constitutes ground for dialogue. Conversations with tricksters will help us ask fresh questions about the purpose and ethics of ethnography, which in turn can enhance our engagement with, and participation in, the world.

Or, perhaps, the trickster is playing his tricks on us academics, as well. ■

Endnotes:

[1]At the time of writing, Mariano Rajoy was leader of the Spanish Christian-democrat "Partido Popular" and President of Spain.

[2]Leader of the German "Democratic Union Party" and Chancellor of Germany.

[3]"Neoliberalism" could be a "sloppy" synonym for financial capitalism, or refer to a vague ideology of individualism and rationalism, or to policies of free markets, or to denote economic practices simply defined as "bad."

[4]The phrase is commonly attributed to Alexandre Dumas, although he never published it in any of his works. It was widely used in the 19th and 20th centuries by Spaniards and non-Spaniards alike to refer to Spain's increasing economic, political, and cultural insignificance in relation to Europe and the US.

[5]Ceuta's wealthiest businessmen, notably the Jewish Bentolila family, started out as army suppliers during the dictatorship.

[6]Literally, The Umbrella People, traders from mainland Spain who often visited, much to the bafflement of Ceutan traders, to buy monumental supplies of umbrellas.

[7]In fact, Spain's rapid economic development started in the final decade of Franco's reign.

[8]Even migrants were drawn into the idea that homeownership marked their integration into Spanish society (Sabaté 2016).

[9]Some localist political parties remain unhappy with this agreement, and lobby for greater self-governing power.

[10]This includes trade, migration, and foreign affairs.

[11]By 2012, Madrid shouldered not only the Delegate's operations but also 60 percent of the City government's expenditure of around €300 million.

[12]Namely, construction and domestic work.

[13]Such as supermarket or shop assistants.

[14]Theoretically, these bonuses offset Ceuta's exorbitant rents, though local Muslims insist these privileges are designed to attract peninsular Christians to counter Muslim's high birth-rates. Private sector workers do not receive these bonuses.

[15]"*Las pagas extras*," introduced by Franco, are two additional salary installments paid in June and December to improve standards of living and move the economy through spending.

[16]In 2016, the Ceutan government was taking care of 814 children (up to 16 years old).

[17]The Spanish derogatory term for Moroccan Muslims, who are thought to possess a malevolent cunning that drives them to parasitically prey on Spanish resources.

[18]Literally, outsiders.

[19]A governmental welfare programme that offers a number of six month contracts to Ceuta's unemployed, befitting their education level. Selection is random, although the general suspicion is patrons swing the odds in favor of their clients.

[20]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOuxWamcSdE.

[21]A conglomeration of banks formed in 2010. In 2012, Bankia came close to the brink of collapse, and had to be semi-nationalized and bailed out (for a value of €20 billion) by the Spanish government.

[22]President of the Generalitat of Catalonia between 2010 and 2015, and leader of the secessionist "Democratic Convergence of Catalonia."

[23]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHgX1QNGHX0.

[24]Literally, a prison-fort.

[25]The PP's main rivals, at the time led by Alfredo Rubalcaba.

[26]A German aristocrat with whom the King was suspected of having a long-time affair.

[27]Ceuta's Mayor-President.

[28]Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWrbAmtZuGc.

[29]Loosely defined by Barber (2005) as sets of expectations and assumptions shared between author and audience that aids the interpretation of a text.

[30]Spencer thought laughter released stress in neck and chest muscles (Morreal 1987). Freud (1976) thought humor central to the "pleasure principle" that drives the id to seek immediate fulfilment and retreat from pain and suffering. Psychoanalysts would have a field-day with Ceutan gallows humor.

[31]We cannot laugh at things we feel sorry for, so the comedian's art lies in creating misfortune without empathy.

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Foreign Language Translations:

Africa Starts at the Pyrenees: Humour, Laughter, and Financial Recession in a Spanish Enclave in Morocco
[**Keywords**: Europe, Mediterranean, Financial Crisis, Bakhtin, Caricature, Humour, Spain, Bergson, joking]

非洲始于比利牛斯山: 幽默, 笑声, 与金融衰退, 在摩洛哥的西班牙飞地
[**关键词**: 欧洲, 金融危机, 巴赫汀, 讽刺画, 西班牙, 柏格森, 开玩笑]

Африка начинается с Пиренеев: Юмор, смех и финансовая рецессия в испанском анклаве в Марокко
[**Ключевые слова**: Европа, финансовый кризис, Бахтин, карикатура, Испания, Бергсон, шутки]

África Começa nos Pireneus: Humor, Riso, e Recessão Financeira num Enclave Espanhol em Marrocos
[**Palavras-chave**: Europa, crise financeira, Bakhtin, caricatura, Espanha, Bergson, brincadeira]

افريقيا تبدأ ببيرنيه: الفكاهة والضحك والكساد المالي في مقاطعة اسبانية بالمغرب
كلمات البحث: أوروبا، الأزمة المالية، بختين، الكاريكاتور، اسبانيا، برغسون، الفكاهة